Evangelism: Theological Currents and Cross-currents Today

David J. Bosch

My assignment is to provide a concise survey of the ways in which evangelism is being understood and practiced today. I assume that this does not preclude an attempt to give my own view on what I believe evangelism should be. One of the problems is that evangelism is understood differently by different people. Another problem is that of terminology. The older term, still dominant in mainline churches, is "evangelism." More recently, however, both evangelicals and Roman Catholics have begun to give preference to the term "evangelization." It does not follow that they give the same contents to the term, as I shall illustrate.

Yet another problem is that of the relationship between the terms "evangelism" and "mission." Perhaps the best way of attempting to clear the cobwebs is to begin by distinguishing between those who regard evangelism and mission as synonyms and those who believe that the two words refer to different realities.

Mission and Evangelism as Synonyms

It is probably true that most people use "mission" and "evangelism" more or less as synonyms. Those who do this do not necessarily agree on what mission/evangelism means. Perhaps one could say that the definitions of mission/evangelism range from a narrow evangelical position to a more or less broad ecumenical one.

Position 1: Mission/evangelism refers to the church's ministry of winning souls for eternity, saving them from eternal damnation. Some years ago a South African evangelist, Reinhard Bonnke, wrote a book with the title *Plundering Hell*. This is what the church's mission is all about: making sure that as many people as possible get "saved" from eternal damnation and go to heaven. According to this first position it would be a *betrayal* of the church's mission to get involved in any other activities. Most people subscribing to this view would be premillennialist in their theology. Typical of the spirit of premillennialism is Dwight L. Moody's most quoted statement from his sermons: "I look upon this world as a wrecked vessel. God has given me a lifeboat and said to me, 'Moody, save all you can.' "[1]

Position 2: This position is slightly "softer" than the first. It also narrows mission/evangelism down to soul-winning. It would concede, nevertheless, that it would be good—at least in theory—to be involved in some other good activities at the same time, activities such as relief work and education. On the whole, however, such activities tend to *distract* from mission as soul-winning. It should therefore not be encouraged. Involvement in society is, in any case, *optional*.

Position 3: Here also mission/evangelism is defined as soul-winning. However, in this view, service ministries (education, health care, social uplift) are important, since they may draw people to Christ. They may function as forerunners of, and aids to, mission. "Service is a means to an end. As long as service makes it possible to confront men with the Gospel, it is useful."[2]

Position 4: Here mission/evangelism relates to other Christian activities in the way that seed relates to fruit. We first have to change individuals by means of the verbal proclamation of the gospel. Once they have accepted Christ as Savior, they will be transformed and become involved in society as a matter of course. In the words of Elton Trueblood, "The call to become fishers of men precedes the call to wash one another's feet."[3] Jesus did not come into the world to change the social order: that is part of the *result* of his coming. In similar fashion the church is not called to change the social order: redeemed individuals will do that.

Position 5: Mission and evangelism are indeed synonyms, but this task entails much more than just the proclamation of the gospel of eternal salvation. It involves the total Christian ministry to the world outside the church. This is, more or less, the traditional position in ecumenical circles. When the International Missionary Council merged with the World Council of Churches (WCC) at its New Delhi meeting in 1961, it became one of several divisions of the WCC and was renamed Commission on World Mission and Evangelism. Both words, "mission" and "evangelism," were thus included in the title, not because they meant different things but precisely because they were, by and large, understood to be synonyms. Another synonym was the word "witness," which is also often used in the New Delhi Report. Phillip Potter is correct when he wrote, in 1968, that "ecumenical literature since Amsterdam (1948) has used 'mission,' 'witness' and 'evangelism' interchangeably."[4] This task was classically formulated as the ministry of the "whole church taking the whole gospel to the whole world." This ministry would, in the classical ecumenical position, always include a call to conversion.

Position 6: This goes beyond the previous position in that it does not insist that mission/evangelism would under all circumstances include a call to repentance and faith in Christ. Gibson Winter, for instance, says, "Why are men not simply called to be human in their historical obligations, for this is man's true end and his salvation."[5] Here mission/evangelism is understood virtually exclusively in interhuman and this-worldly categories. In similar vein George V. Pixley defines the kingdom of God exclusively as a historical category. The Palestinian Jesus movement, which was, according to him, a wholly political movement, was completely misunderstood by Paul, John, and others, who spiritualized Jesus' political program.[6] In Pixley's thinking, then, salvation becomes entirely this-worldly, God's kingdom a political program, history one-dimensional, and mission/evangelism a project to change the structures of society.

Evangelism Distinguished from Mission

There are four ways in which evangelism and mission are distinguished from each other as referring to different realities.

1. The "objects" of mission and evangelism are different. In the view of Johannes Verkuyl, for instance, evangelism has to do with the communication of the Christian faith in Western society, while mission means communicating the gospel in the third world.[7] Evangelism has to do with those who are *no longer* Christians or who are nominal Christians. It refers to the calling back to Christ of those who have become estranged from the church. Mission, on the other hand, means calling to faith those

David J. Bosch is Dean of the Faculty of Theology at the University of South Africa, Pretoria, and Editor of Missionalia, *journal of the Southern African Missiological Society.*

International Bulletin
of Missionary Research

Established 1950 as Occasional Bulletin from the Missionary Research Library. Named Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research 1977. Renamed International Bulletin of Missionary Research 1981.

Published quarterly in January, April, July, and October by the

Overseas Ministries Study Center
6315 Ocean Avenue, Ventnor, New Jersey 08406, U.S.A.
Telephone (609) 823-6671

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Subscriptions: $14.00 for one year, $26 for two years, and $37 for three years, postpaid worldwide. Foreign subscribers should send payment by check in local currency equivalent to U.S. dollar amount. Individual copies are $5.00; bulk rates upon request. Correspondence regarding subscriptions and address changes should be sent to: International Bulletin of Missionary Research, Circulation Department, P.O. Box 1308-E, Fort Lee, New Jersey 07024-9958, U.S.A.

New subscriptions and renewals for persons in the United Kingdom should be sent with payment to: Paternoster Press Ltd., Paternoster House, 3 Mount Radford Crescent, Exeter, U.K. EX2 4JW. Subscription rates in U.K. are: £11.00 for one year, £19 for two years, and £26 for three years.

Advertising:
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11 Graffam Road, South Portland, Maine 04106
Telephone: (207) 799-4387

Articles appearing in this journal are abstracted and indexed in:

Bibliografia Missionaria
Christian Periodical Index
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Missionalia
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Religion and Theological Abstracts

Opinions expressed in the *International Bulletin* are those of the authors and not necessarily of the Overseas Ministries Study Center.

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Second-class postage paid at Atlantic City, New Jersey.
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to International Bulletin of Missionary Research, P.O. Box 1308-E, Fort Lee, New Jersey 07024.

ISSN 0272-6122

who have always been strangers to the gospel. It refers to those who are *not yet* Christians.

This view is still generally held in continental European circles, both Lutheran and Reformed churches. It is, in fact, also the traditional view in Roman Catholicism, even in Vatican II documents such as the Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*) and the Decree on Mission (*Ad Gentes*).

2. A second group of theologians, instead of distinguishing between evangelism and mission, have decided simply to drop the word "mission" from their vocabulary. The French Catholic theologian Claude Geffré prefers "evangelization" to "mission" because of the latter term's "territorial connotation . . . and its historical link with the process of colonization."[8] Other Roman Catholics appear to move in a similar direction. John Walsh, in his book *Evangelization and Justice*, calls everything the church is doing in the areas of "human development, liberation, justice and peace . . . *integral* parts of the ministry of evangelization."[9] In similar vein Segundo Galilea recently published a book in which the activities described in the Beatitudes of the Gospels of Luke and Matthew are designated "evangelism": *The Beatitudes: To Evangelize as Jesus did.*[10] Once more a very comprehensive, almost all-embracing understanding of evangelism comes to the fore and the concept "mission" is dropped.

3. A third group of theologians offer a variation of the position just described. They hold onto both concepts, "mission" and "evangelism"; however, the way they do it is to regard "evangelism" as the wider term and "mission" as the narrower term. Evangelism is described as an umbrella concept "for the entire manner in which the gospel becomes a reality in man's life"; it includes proclamation, translation, dialogue, service, and presence. Mission, on the other hand, becomes a purely theological concept, "used for the origin, the motivation and the ratification" of the activities referred to above.[11]

4. The fourth way in which we could differentiate between mission and evangelism is, in effect, the obverse of the one just described. Here "mission" becomes the wider, more comprehensive concept and "evangelism" the narrower one. There are, however, different ways in which this can be understood: *(a)* John Stott, and to a lesser extent the Lausanne Covenant, defines mission as evangelism plus social action. These two parts or aspects of mission are both important; indeed, they are imperative. The Lausanne Covenant adds, however: "In the church's mission of sacrificial service *evangelism is primary*" (italics added). John Stott defends this prioritization of evangelism over against social involvement, for "how can we seriously maintain that political and economic liberation is just as important as eternal salvation?"[12] When criticized by Ron Sider for holding this position, Stott says, "Well, if pressed, I would still stand by it on the grounds that, *if one has to choose*, eternal salvation is more important than temporal welfare. . . . But . . . one should not normally have to choose."[13] *(b)* A second variation in the approach that regards mission as consisting of evangelism and social involvement is to state that these two expressions of mission are indeed genuinely different aspects of mission, but since they are equally important we should never prioritize. We may also say that they are so intimately intertwined that it would be futile to try to unravel them. *(c)* Third, there are those who—while agreeing with John Stott that mission is evangelism plus social action—would argue that in today's world there can be no doubt that social involvement should take precedence over evangelism.

Evangelism: Toward a Redefinition

Let me now attempt to respond to the bewildering variety of

interpretations of evangelism. On the whole I would align myself with those who regard mission as the wider and evangelism as the narrower concept. I have problems, however, with those—and there are many—who, following John Stott, define mission as evangelism plus social involvement. Depicting evangelism and social action as two separate segments or components of mission is unsatisfactory, since it may—and often does—lead to a battle for supremacy. Stott himself maintains the primacy of evangelism, thereby willy-nilly relegating social involvement to a secondary position. To illustrate the problem, I refer to the Thailand Statement, produced by the Consultation on World Evangelization that was held in Pattaya, Thailand, in June 1980. The meeting was organized by the Lausanne Continuation Committee and there were frequent references to the Lausanne Covenant of 1974. At one point the statement says that "nothing contained in the Lausanne Covenant is beyond our concern, *so long as it is clearly related to world evangelization*" (italics added). The problem with this statement lies in what it does not say. It does not also assert that "nothing contained in the Lausanne Covenant is beyond our concern, *so long as it is clearly related to social involvement.*" In remaining silent on this aspect, the Thailand Statement is opting for a position of dualism. The moment you regard mission as consisting of two separate or separable components—evangelism and social action—you have, in principle, admitted that each of the two components has a life of its own. You are then suggesting that it is possible to have evangelism without a social dimension and Christian social action without an evangelistic dimension. Stott's "separate but equal" position is, in fact, dangerous. It is too easy, in this definition, for any one of the two components to make a unilateral declaration of independence, so to speak.

"Ultimately, then, mission means being involved in the redemption of the universe and the glorification of God."

I therefore wish to introduce an important modification in Stott's definition. I accept—in broad outlines—his wider definition of mission as being the total task that God has set the church for the salvation of the world. In its missionary involvement, the church steps out of itself, into the wider world. It crosses all kinds of frontiers and barriers: geographical, social, political, ethnic, cultural, religious, ideological. Into all these areas the church-in-mission carries the message of God's salvation. Ultimately, then, mission means being involved in the redemption of the universe and the glorification of God.

If this is mission, what then is evangelism? Let us consider this under eight aspects.

1. Evangelism is the *core, heart,* or *center* of mission; it consists in the proclamation of salvation in Christ to nonbelievers, in announcing forgiveness of sins, in calling people to repentance and faith in Christ, in inviting them to become living members of Christ's earthly community and to begin a life in the power of the Holy Spirit. The apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi,* article 9, puts it in the following words: "As kernel and centre of the good News, Christ proclaims salvation, this great gift of God which is liberation from everything that oppresses people but which is, above all, liberation from sin and the Evil One, in the joy of knowing God and being known by him, of seeing him, and of being turned over to him." People are "being led into the mystery of God's love, who invites [them] to establish a personal relationship with him in Christ" (*Ad Gentes* 13).

This does not limit evangelism to soul-winning, as some argue. It is a biblically untenable position to take, as our ultimate concern in evangelism, the salvaging of a soul that must endure when all the world has perished. Lesslie Newbigin calls this a "Hindu solution," and adds: "In the sharpest possible contrast to this attempt, the Bible always sees the human person realistically as a living body-soul whose existence cannot be understood apart from the network of relationships that bind the person to family, tribe, nation, and all the progeny of Adam."[14]

A variant of the emphasis on soul-winning is the idea that evangelism is concerned primarily with the inward and spiritual side of people. As Harold Lindsell puts it: "The mission of the church is pre-eminently spiritual—that is, its major concerns revolve around the non-material aspects of life."[15] This is a gnostic interpretation of the Christian faith, however; it denies the corporateness of salvation as well as the incarnational character of the gospel.

If—in contrast to this—we describe evangelism in terms of calling people to faith in Christ, we refer to human beings of flesh and blood in *all* their relationships; we do not refer to evangelism as operative only in individual or spiritual categories. We do not believe, however, that the central dimension of evangelism as calling people to faith and a new life can ever be relinquished. I have called evangelism the "heart" of mission. If you cut the heart out of a body, that body becomes a corpse. With evangelism cut out, mission dies; it ceases to be mission.

2. Evangelism seeks to bring people into the visible community of believers (cf. *Ad Gentes* 13). In 1982 the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches published a very important document entitled *Mission and Evangelism—An Ecumenical Affirmation.* Paragraph 25 of this document states, inter alia: "It is at the heart of the Christian mission to foster the multiplication of local congregations in every human community. The planting of the seed of the Gospel will bring forward a people gathered around the Word and sacrament. . . . This task of sowing the seed needs to be continued until there is, in every human community, a cell of the kingdom, a church confessing Jesus Christ." Even so, evangelism is not the same as recruitment of church members. As Paul Löffler puts it: "[Evangelism] is not a form of ecclesiastical propaganda. Its aim cannot be to enlarge the membership of a particular church or to promote a particular doctrine."[16]

There are two manifestations of the understanding of evangelism as church expansion. In the traditional Roman Catholic approach, evangelism is defined as the road from the church to the church. Here the church is regarded as a divine institution franchised by God and stocked with a supply of heavenly graces, which the clergy can dispense to their customers. In Protestant circles, evangelism is frequently understood as "transferring" as many people as possible from the world into the church, for church and world are regarded as being in absolute antithesis to each other. Numerical church growth is frequently of the highest importance, and such growth is seen as the fruit of successful evangelism. Donald McGavran of the Church Growth movement, for instance, does not seem to experience much difficulty with the multiplication of denominations. In his major work we read, "Frequently a church splits and both sections grow,"[17] and he does not appear to be overly worried by this. Proselytizing evangelism also seems to be in order; McGavran euphemistically calls

it "transfer growth" (as distinguished from "biological" and "conversion" growth).[18]

Such preoccupation with ecclesial ingathering may easily turn evangelism into a mechanism for institutional self-aggrandizement. In the face of this we have to emphasize that authentic evangelism may in fact cause people *not* to join the church, because of the cost involved.

3. Evangelism involves witnessing to what God has done, is doing, and will do. It therefore does not announce anything that we are bringing about but draws people's attention to what God has brought about and is still bringing about. Evangelism is not a call to put something into effect. It gives testimony to the fact that Christ has already conquered the powers of darkness (Col. 1:13) and has broken down the middle wall of partition (Eph. 2:14–17). The British Nationwide Initiative in Evangelism (in which "ecumenicals," "evangelicals," and Roman Catholics cooperated) put this in the following words: "Christians commend not themselves but the love of God as known in Jesus."[19]

This does not suggest that evangelism consists in verbal witness only. It consists in word *and* deed, proclamation *and* presence, explanation *and* example. The verbal witness indeed remains indispensable, not least because our deeds and our conduct are ambiguous; they need elucidation. The best we can hope for is that people will deduce from our behavior and our actions that we have "a hope within" us. Our lives are not sufficiently transparent for people to be able to ascertain whence our hope comes. So we must name the Name of him in whom we believe (1 Pet. 3:15). But this does not mean that evangelism is only verbal. The biblical concept *euangelizesthai* refers to more than the English word "preach" does. Richard Cook has suggested that—at least in Paul's epistle to the Galatians—the Greek word *euangelizesthai* should not be rendered "preach the Gospel" but "embody the Gospel in their midst."[20]

4. Evangelism is invitation; it should never deteriorate into coaxing, much less into threat. Both these—coaxing and threat—are often used in so-called evangelistic campaigns. Sometimes evangelism is interpreted to mean inculcating guilt feelings in people. They have to be made to see how sinful they are so that they—in despair, as it were—will turn to Christ in order to be saved. They have to be shown that this is the only way out: like mice in a laboratory, the listeners are supposed to experience an electric shock each time they try a wrong solution, until they are persuaded to enter through the one and only safe door.

A variation of interpreting evangelism as the inculcating of guilt feelings is to scare people into repentance and conversion with stories about the horrors of hell. Lesslie Newbigin comments on this approach: ". . . to make the fear of hell the ultimate motivation for faith in Christ is to create a horrible caricature of evangelism. I still feel a sense of shame when I think of some of the 'evangelistic' addresses I have heard—direct appeals to the lowest of human emotions, selfishness and fear. One could only respect the toughminded majority of the listeners who rejected the message."[21] Such an approach indeed degrades the gospel of free grace and divine love. People should turn to God because they are drawn to him by his love, not because they are pushed to him for fear of hell. Newbigin elaborates: "It is only in the light of the grace of God in Jesus Christ that we know the terrible abyss of darkness into which we must fall if we put our trust anywhere but in that grace." Furthermore, "[T]he grave and terrible warnings that the New Testament contains about the possibility of eternal loss are directed to those who are confident that they are among the saved. It is the branches of the vine, not the surrounding brambles, that are threatened with burning."[22]

5. Evangelism is possible only when the community that evangelizes—the church—is a radiant manifestation of the Christian faith and has a winsome lifestyle. Marshall McLuhan has taught us that the medium is the message. This is eminently true of the church-in-evangelism. If the church is to impart to the world a message of hope and love, of faith and justice, something of this should become visible, audible, and tangible in the church itself. According to the book of Acts the early Christian community was characterized by compassion, fellowship, sharing, worship, service, and teaching (Acts 2:42–47; 4:32–35). Its conspicuously different lifestyle became in itself a witness to Christ. The Christians did not need to say, "Join us"; outsiders come to the church, drawn to it as if by a magnet. We, however, frequently have to push or pull people into the church. In the words of Michael Green: "Sometimes when a church has tried everything else—in vain—it comes reluctantly round to the idea that if it is to stay in business it had better resign itself to an evangelistic campaign."[23] Usually, however, this achieves precious little, because of the image that our churches have and because of their lack of relevance. They tend to be clubs for religious folklore. So what the churches often do get involved in is not evangelism, but propaganda; that is, they reproduce carbon copies of themselves and impart their own ghetto mentality to the people they "reach." In their evangelistic outreach, they often resemble a lunatic farmer who carries his harvest into his burning barn.

The German missiologist Hans-Werner Gensichen mentions five characteristics of a church involved in evangelism: *(a)* it lets outsiders feel at home; *(b)* it is not merely an object of pastoral care with the pastor having the monopoly; *(c)* its members are involved in society; *(d)* it is structurally flexible and adaptable; *(e)* it does not defend the interests of any select group of people.[24]

6. To evangelize is to take risks in at least two respects. In the first place, the evangelist or the church-in-evangelism has no control over how the gospel it proclaims will "come alive" in the hearers' context. The gospel may, and probably will, surprise and even upset them. There is no way, however, of avoiding this risk. Lesslie Newbigin puts it as follows: "The way in which the Gospel will 'come alive' to every human person will be known in that person's experience and can not be determined *a priori*. The attempt so to determine it always ends in the legalistic distortion of the Gospel—that is to say the distortion by which a free personal response to grace is replaced by a pre-determined pattern of behaviour."[25]

"Authentic evangelism may in fact cause people *not* to join the church, because of the cost involved."

Second, the evangelist is running a risk of getting changed in the course of the evangelistic outreach. Take the well-known story narrated in Acts 10 as an example. We know it as the story of the conversion of Cornelius. It could, with equal justification, bear the title "The Conversion of Peter" or "The Conversion of an Evangelist." The person facing the toughest decisions here is not the pagan Cornelius but the Rev. Simon Peter. Walter Hollenweger comments correctly: "The real evangelist cannot help but take the risk that in the course of his evangelism his under-

standing of Christ will get corrected."[26] For this is precisely what happened to Peter. In Cornelius's house he did not just receive some additional theological insights. No, he began to understand Christ in a new way.

Usually, when the church sends out missionaries and evangelists, it is in the firm conviction that we, the believers, are in possession of the whole truth, whereas those to whom we go, the so-called pagans, sit in darkness and are doomed. Not for a moment does the church-in-evangelism and its evangelists expect that they themselves will change; all necessary change has to take place at the "receivers' " end. After all, we go out to help others get converted, not to be converted ourselves!

If, however, we are involved in authentic evangelism, things are indeed different. Look at Paul, for instance. José Comblin describes what happened to Paul. "When the Spirit sent Paul to the Greeks, it was not just to evangelize them; it was also to make it possible for Paul himself to see the real heart of his message. . . . The Spirit reveals to the Church through the mediation of new Christians . . . that many old things are not necessary, that they actually obscure the truth of Jesus Christ."[27]

"Whenever the church's involvement in society becomes secondary and optional, whenever the church invites people to take refuge in the name of Jesus without challenging the dominion of evil, it becomes a countersign of the kingdom."

7. Those who respond positively to evangelism receive salvation as a present gift and with it assurance of eternal blessedness. It is, however, not the primary purpose of evangelism to impart to people such guaranteed happiness, neither for this world nor the next. Some evangelists preach: "Are you lonely? Are you unhappy? Do you want peace of mind and personal fulfillment? Then come to Jesus!" Others say, as Francis Grim states in his book, *Die hemel en die hel:* the most important question facing every one of us is: "Where will I spend eternity?"[28]

Christ gives people joy, hope, trust, vision, relief, and courage in this life, as well as a blessed assurance for all eternity. But if the offer of all this gets center-stage attention in our evangelism, if evangelism becomes the offer of a psychological panacea, then the gospel is degraded to a consumer product and becomes the opiate of the people. Then evangelism fosters a self-centered and self-serving mind-set among people and a narcissistic pursuit of fulfilled personhood. Then evangelism has become a television commercial where the call to conversion is presented in a Things-go-better-with-Jesus wrapping.

Karl Barth, in a penetrating excursus in his *Church Dogmatics* (IV/3), addressed himself to this issue.[29] Christian teaching, he says, has tended to regard Christians as enjoying an indescribably magnificent private good fortune. People's chief concern is then with their personal experiences of grace and salvation. Barth regards all this as thoroughly unbiblical and egocentric. The personal enjoyment of salvation, he argues, nowhere becomes the central theme of biblical conversion stories. Not that the enjoyment of salvation is wrong, unimportant, and unbiblical, but it is almost incidental and secondary. What makes a person a Christian is not primarily his or her personal experience of grace and redemption, but his or her ministry.

These comments of Barth have tremendous consequences for our understanding of evangelism. Evangelism that stops at calling people to accept Christ is incomplete and truncated. The church exists for the world, not the world for the church, as a reservoir from which the church draws. It is not simply to *receive* life that people are called to become Christians, but rather to *give* life.

8. Evangelism thus does not simply offer individuals personal bliss. Evangelism is calling people to become followers of Jesus. It is enlisting people for mission—a mission as comprehensive as that of Jesus. This hardly happens in most present-day evangelistic outreach. Often evangelists preach an entirely uncontextualized and disembodied gospel. They frequently employ all kinds of psychological and rhetorical devices to persuade people to accept their specific message. People are then indeed challenged to repent and come to faith, but often the challenge is issued in respect of those areas of life where conversion will not be too costly. That evangelism will take on these features is, in a sense, a foregone conclusion, in view of the fact that the churches into which new members are invited are usually compromised in the surrounding culture, particularly in societies where the pastor is considered to be in the employ of the congregation and thus dependent on the parishioners' goodwill and support.

This kind of evangelism calls upon people to adopt a lifestyle that is defined almost exclusively in micro-ethical and religio-cultic categories. A case in point is Bishop J. Waskom Pickett's classic, *Christian Mass Movements in India*. Pickett measures successful evangelism in terms of "attainments" in eleven areas: (1) knowledge of the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed, and the Ten Commandments; (2) Sunday observance; (3) full membership in the church; (4) church attendance; (5) frequency of church services; (6) support of the church; (7) freedom from idolatry, charms, and sorcery; (8) abstention from participation in non-Christian festivals; (9) freedom from fear of evil spirits; (10) Christian marriage; (11) abstention from intoxicating beverages.[30] Where these characteristics manifest themselves in people, so the argument goes, evangelism has been successful. In similar vein Peter Wagner suggests that evangelism means calling people to "a code of life which includes positive behavior traits such as a daily Bible reading and prayer, grace before meals, and regular church attendance, as well as certain negative traits such as total abstinence from or extremely moderate use of tobacco, alcoholic beverages, and profanity in speech."[31] Note, however, that in this definition, as well as in Pickett's list of "attainments," all the positive elements have to do with narrowly defined religious and micro-ethical activities, and all the negative ones (those from which Christians should abstain) with the world. There is no reference whatsoever to any positive attitude to, or involvement in, the world. There is no indication that people's personal and spiritual liberation should have implications on the social and political front. There is a sharp break here; the liberation process is truncated.

To all this we must say that, whenever the church's involvement in society becomes secondary and optional, whenever the church invites people to take refuge in the name of Jesus without challenging the dominion of evil, it becomes a countersign of the kingdom. It is then not involved in evangelism but in counter-evangelism. When compassionate action is in principle subordinated to the preaching of a message of individual salvation, the

church is offering cheap grace to people and in the process denaturing the gospel. The content of our gospel then is—in the devastating formulation of Orlando Costas—"a conscience-soothing Jesus, with an unscandalous cross, an otherworldly kingdom, a private, inwardly spirit, a pocket God, a spiritualized Bible, and an escapist church."[32] If the gospel is indeed the gospel of the kingdom, and if the kingdom is "the detailed expression of [God's] caring control of the whole of life," then we are concerned in our evangelism with a God whose "nature as king [is] to . . . uphold *justice and equity,* to *watch over the circumstances of strangers, widows and orphans,* and to liberate the poor and the prisoners."[33]

In Conclusion

In summary, then, evangelism may be defined as that dimension and activity of the church's mission which seeks to offer every person, everywhere, a valid opportunity to be directly challenged by the gospel of explicit faith in Jesus Christ,[34] with a view to embracing him as Savior, becoming a living member of his community, and being enlisted in his service of reconciliation, peace, and justice on earth.

Notes

1. Quoted in G. M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture. The Shaping of Twentieth-century Evangelicalism: 1870–1925.* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1980), p. 38.
2. Harold Lindsell, "A Rejoinder," *International Review of Mission* 216 (October 1965): 439.
3. Trueblood, *The Validity of the Christian Mission* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), p. 98.
4. Potter, "Evangelism and the World Council of Churches," *Ecumenical Review* 20, no. 2 (1968): 176.
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